

## Environmental Protection Agency

## §2.112

shall also furnish the Freedom of Information officer the name, address, and telephone number of the EPA employee(s) having custody of the records, and shall maintain the records in a manner permitting their prompt forwarding to the General Counsel upon request if an appeal from the initial denial is filed. See also §2.204(f).

(b) If it appears that some or all of the requested records are not in the possession of the EPA office which has been assigned responsibility for responding to the request but may be in the possession of some other EPA office, the Freedom of Information officer who is monitoring the request shall be so informed immediately.

(c) In determining which records are responsive to a request, the EPA office responding shall ordinarily include those records within the Agency's possession as of the date of the Agency's receipt of the request.

(d) When a request for EPA records encompasses records of another Federal agency, the EPA office shall either: (1) Respond to the request after consulting with the originating agency when appropriate or; (2) promptly transfer responsibility for responding to the request to the originating agency provided that the other agency is subject to the FOIA. Whenever the EPA office refers a request to another agency, it shall notify the requestor of the referral.

[41 FR 36902, Sept. 1, 1976, as amended at 50 FR 51659, Dec. 18, 1985]

### **§2.112 Time allowed for issuance of initial determination.**

(a) Except as otherwise provided in this section, not later than the tenth working day after the date of receipt by a Freedom of Information Office of a request for records, the EPA office responsible for responding to the request shall issue a written determination to the requestor stating which of the requested records will, and which will not, be released and the reason for any denial of a request. If the records are not known to exist or are not in EPA's possession, the EPA office shall so inform the requestor. To the extent requested records which are in EPA's possession are published by the Federal

Government, the response may inform the requestor that the records are available for inspection and where copies can be obtained.

(b) The period of 10 working days shall be measured from the date the request is first received and logged in by the Headquarters or regional Freedom of Information Office.

(c) There shall be excluded from the period of 10 working days (or any extension thereof) any time which elapses between the date that a requestor is notified by EPA under §2.109 that his request does not reasonably identify the records sought, and the date that the requestor furnishes a reasonable identification.

(d) There shall be excluded from the period of 10 working days (or any extension thereof) any time which elapses between the date that a requestor is notified by EPA under §2.120 that prepayment or assurance of payment of fees is required, and the date that the requestor pays (or makes suitable arrangements to pay) such charges.

(e) The EPA office taking action under §2.111, after notifying the appropriate Freedom of Information Office, may extend the basic 10-day period established under subsection (a) of this section by a period not to exceed 10 additional working days, by furnishing written notice to the requestor within the basic 10-day period stating the reasons for such extension and the date by which the office expects to be able to issue a determination. The period may be so extended only when absolutely necessary, only for the period required, and only when one or more of the following unusual circumstances require the extension:

(1) There is a need to search for and collect the requested records from field facilities or other establishments that are separate from the office processing the request:

(2) There is a need to search for, collect, and appropriately examine a voluminous amount of separate and distinct records which are demanded in a single request; or

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(3) There is a need for consultation, which shall be conducted with all practicable speed, with another agency having a substantial interest in the determination of the request or among two or more components of EPA.

(f) Failure of EPA to issue a determination within the 10-day period or any authorized extension shall constitute final agency action which authorizes the requestor to commence an action in an appropriate Federal district court to obtain the records.

[41 FR 36902, Sept. 1, 1976, as amended at 50 FR 51659, Dec. 18, 1985]

### § 2.113 Initial denials of requests.

(a) An initial denial of a request may be issued only for the following reasons:

(1) A statutory provision, provision of this part, or court order requires that the information not be disclosed;

(2) The record is exempt from mandatory disclosure under 5 U.S.C. 552(b) and EPA has decided that the public interest would not be served by disclosure; or

(3) Section 2.204(d)(1) requires initial denial because a third person must be consulted in connection with a business confidentiality claim.

(b) The Deputy Administrator, Assistant Administrators, Regional Administrators, the General Counsel, the Inspector General, Associate Administrators, and heads of headquarters staff offices are delegated the authority to issue initial determinations. This authority may be redelegated; *Provided*, That the authority to issue initial denials of requests for existing, located records (other than denials based solely on § 2.204(d)(1)) may be redelegated only to persons occupying positions not lower than division director or equivalent.

(c) [Reserved]

(d)(1) Each initial determination to deny a request shall be written, signed, and dated, and, except as provided in paragraph (d)(2), shall contain a reference to the Request Identification Number, shall identify the records that are being withheld (individually, or, if the denial covers a large number of similar records, by described category), and shall state the basis for denial for

each record or category of records being withheld.

(2) No initial determination shall reveal the existence or nonexistence of records if identifying the mere fact of the existence or nonexistence of those records would reveal confidential business information, confidential personal information or classified national security information. Instead of identifying the existence or nonexistence of the records, the initial determination shall state that the request is denied because either the records do not exist or they are exempt from mandatory disclosure under the applicable provision of 5 U.S.C. 552(b). No such determination shall be made without the concurrence of the General Counsel or his designee. The General Counsel has designated the Contracts and Information Law Branch to act on these requests for concurrence. See § 2.121 for guidance on initial determinations denying, in limited circumstances, the existence of certain law enforcement records or information.

(e) If the decision to deny a request is made by an authorized EPA employee other than the person signing the determination letter, that other person's identity and position shall be stated in the determination letter.

(f) Each initial determination which denies, in whole or in part, a request for one or more existing, located EPA records (including determinations described in § 2.113(d)(2) of this section) shall state that the requester may appeal the initial denial by sending a written appeal to the address shown in § 2.106(a) within 30 days after receipt of the determination. An initial determination which only denies the existence of records, however, will not include a notice of appeal rights.

(g) A determination shall be deemed issued on the date the determination letter is placed in EPA mailing channels for first class mailing to the requestor, delivered to the U.S. Postal Service for mailing, or personally delivered to the requestor, whichever date first occurs.

[41 FR 36902, Sept. 1, 1976, as amended at 50 FR 51659, Dec. 18, 1985; 53 FR 216, Jan. 5, 1988]